

Steelers finish long hard climb

PITTSBURGH (AP) — Since mid-October, every football game had the same meaning for the Pittsburgh Steelers — lose it and you're out.

"We've been in the playoffs for nine weeks," said coach Chuck Noll at yesterday's meeting with reporters. "It's that same kind of feeling. Now everyone has it."

After losing four of their first five games, the Steelers won nine straight to earn the AFC Central crown and the right to face Baltimore in the first round of the playoffs Sunday.

Colts' coach Ted Marchibroda knows what it's like to get to the playoffs the hard way. His team had to do the same thing last year.

"That's why it's so unbelievable. The Steelers won six of those games with a rookie at quarterback, too," he said in a telephone conference call from Maryland.

"Sometimes you really don't know how good you are until you have to show it all."

The Steelers must share some of the credit with Oakland. The Raiders, who

welcome New England for the other half of the AFC playoffs Saturday, knocked Cincinnati out of Pittsburgh's way en route to the division championship.

Are Noll's players anxious for a rematch with the Raiders, who handed them the first of four defeats in a row?

"We have no preference as to who our next opponent might be," Noll said. "We'd like to play a second game. That's our only preference."

Pittsburgh beat the Colts 28-10 in the first round of the playoffs last year, but Noll had praise for a team he said has matured and improved since then.

"Their defense is awesome," said Noll. "And their offense can put Lydell Mitchell in there and grind it out or get the big bomb. They're the leading scorers in the league and that says something."

"But when you're talking about the playoffs, you're talking about the best."

Marchibroda was even more lavish in his compliments.

"Without any doubt Pittsburgh is the best football team in the league," he said. "I said at the beginning of the season that Pittsburgh was the team to beat."

"We'll have to play our best football of the year and make no mistakes in order to win. You have to beat Pittsburgh with all your big guns."

"The Steelers have no weaknesses."

Said Noll, without knowing of Marchibroda's assessment, "That's what we play the game to find out."

Edge Delaware, lose to Lehigh

Icemen skate to weekend split

By JERRY LUCCHI
Collegian Sports Writer
For the hockey purist it was a hell of a weekend. For those who like to keep records, it left a lot to be desired.

The purists enjoyed the two well-matched games played by the Penn State Hockey Club last weekend due to the abundance to goals scored, the hard checking and the tough play of the goaltenders for all the teams involved.

The record keepers weren't quite as thrilled with the play, however, as the Lions split two games, defeating Delaware, 4-3, on Friday night and losing to Lehigh, 7-5, on Sunday. Currently the Lions stand at 3-2-1.

The Delaware win was

especially pleasing to coach Bob Hettema's squad because in addition to being the team's first victory in the Mid-Atlantic Collegiate Hockey Conference, it was the first time the local icemen have beaten the Blue Hens on their home rink.

"After the game with Delaware, everyone, including the losing coach, the referees and the fans thought it was as fine a game as you could have wanted to see,"

Hettema said.

The game was indeed a well-balanced affair as each team had 34 shots on goal and seven penalties.

Wingers Dennis Herr and Bill Galli were a two-man offense for the Lions, as both scored twice in the contest. Pete Lambert, the grad student goalie from the University of Toronto, stopped 31 shots en route to his first victory of the year.

The Lions were involved in

another close game against Lehigh but failed in a comeback bid and were defeated 7-5.

"After a strong second period we tied the score 3-3 and thought we could keep the momentum going in the third period," Hettema said. "We thought we were going to take over and skate them into the ice but instead we began to tire."

The Lions did appear to be taking the momentum away

from Lehigh when Tom Horgas scored the go-ahead goal at 1:18 in the final period. But when Lehigh matched that goal a few minutes later, the partisan crowd spurred the Engineers on to victory.

Bill Richardson was in goal and stopped 42 shots. The Lion attack was balanced with Jerry Fry, Terry Brownschilde, Jim Lynch, Tom Horgas and Galli scoring.

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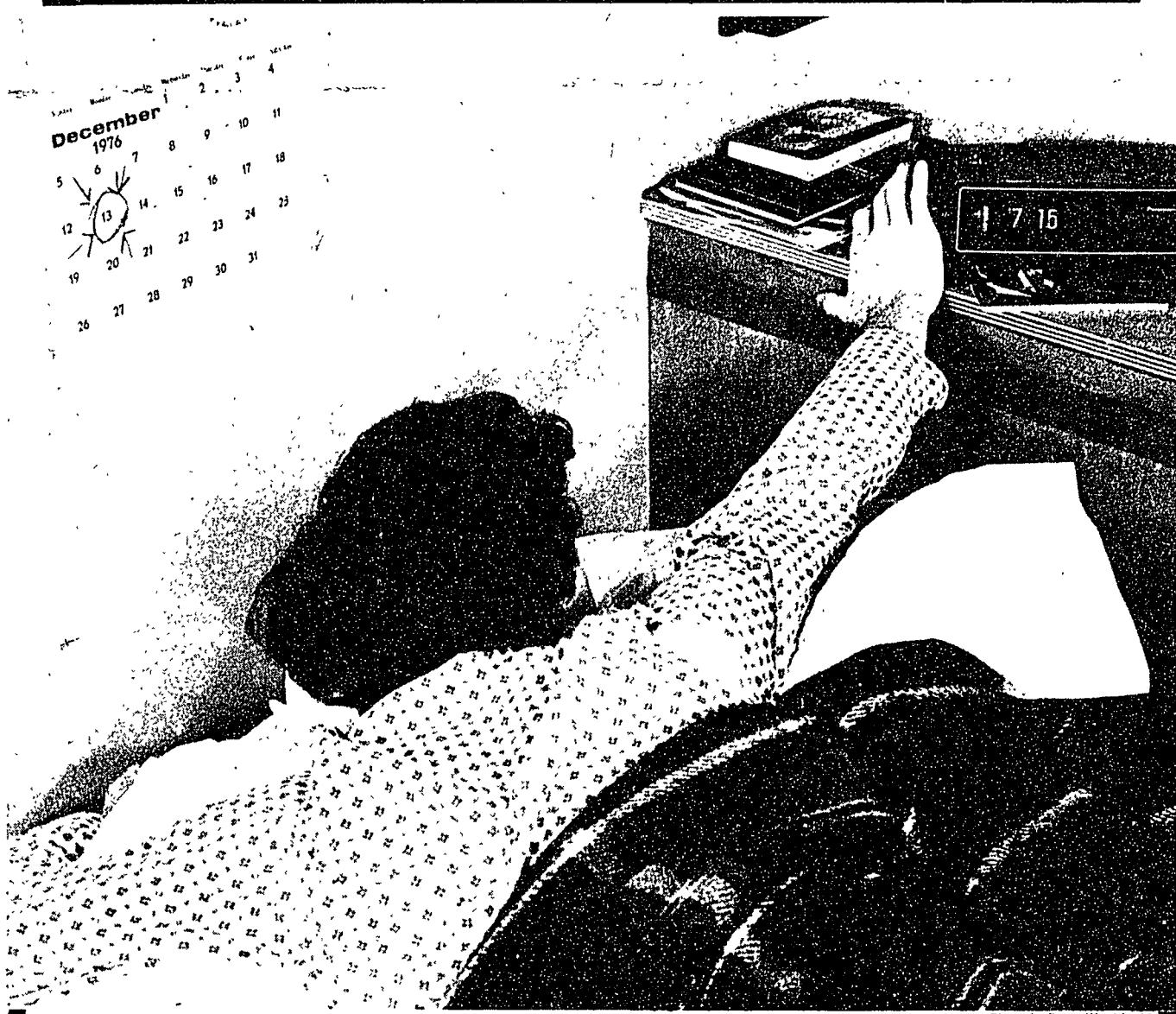
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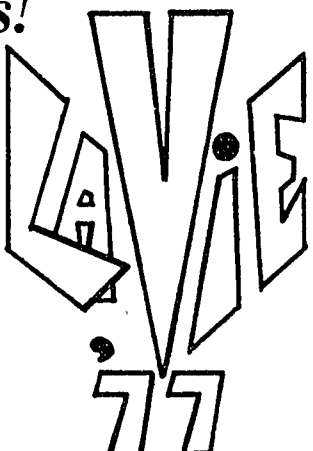
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